

02349

1968/11/21

~~SECRET/NODIS/HARVAN/DOUBLE PLUS~~

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20508

Settlement

26

- End of a line in France
- Withdrawal of troops

U-3

November 21, 1968.

Inspection
Infiltration
Lease

hao

11 NOV 68
Boxes

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ROSTOW

At today's No Committee meeting you may wish to discuss the HARVAN message on mutual withdrawal. It concerns me on four counts:

- Tone: It reads as though the GVN is the enemy rather than Hanoi. We must change this attitude in Paris -- without precluding the possibility that we may have to get tough with the GVN from time to time.

- Procedure: It suggests dissemination of the message to a larger readership than the HARVAN DOUBLE PLUS. This is designed to get the message to those individuals who Paris knows would tend to support their position. This will create major dissension here in Washington -- public as well as private.

- Substance: (two counts)

-- HARVAN propose progressive and mutual step-by-step withdrawal. I believe that we must get off this kick immediately. Paris must be made to understand that we seek an honest-to-God settlement, not simply a step-by-step de-escalation leading to (1) bugout or (2) a reduction of the commitment of U. S. resources to a war to be continued for a longer period of time at a lower level of intensity. At some point -- several months from now if there has been no progress in Paris and considerable progress on the ground -- we might want to try this route. For the present, however, I think it essential that we try for a package settlement. With a package settlement, withdrawal ^{problems} would be minimized.

-- HARVAN raise the crucial issue of the meaning of the Manila Communique. Statement relating withdrawals to the subsidence of the level of violence. Before we start fighting with the GVN on this issue, we need to get agreement within the U. S. government.

1. HARVAN notes considerable grounds for his interpretation of the Communique, i.e.

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NIJ 91-508

~~SECRET/NODIS/HARVAN/DOUBLE PLUS~~

By sig, NARA, Date 12-1-92

~~SECRET/NODIS/HARVAN/DOUBLE PLUS~~

--- A February 1968 Bundy Planning Group paper. This in itself does not preclude a different interpretation, but I think we need to make all concerned ^{understand} that this and similar back-up papers are planning documents which (1) are not policy documents and (2) have not been approved as policy.

--- Bundy's backgrounder in Manila in October 1966. It seems to me that this was unfortunate in that it tended to spell out that which I thought we had deliberately wished to keep ambiguous. In any event, I do not believe that our policy needs to be or should be governed by backgrounders.

--- More importantly, Harriman's statement at the meeting with Tho on 15 September. I believe that it was most unfortunate that he specified that the level of violence did not refer to violence that might occur among South Vietnamese after the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces. I must note, however, that Harriman told Washington ahead of time what he planned to say and his proposal was approved by Washington -- but not by the GVN or the TCCs.

2. In my view, we ought to walk the cat back to our original ambiguous position and everyone must be clear that we wish to remain ambiguous. Undoubtedly, this would be difficult, but we ought to be able to find ways of telling the North Vietnamese we didn't mean what they thought we meant. They are always accusing us of changing positions anyway -- and they, of course, have reneged on things which they have said.

3. If, on the other hand, we intend to stick by the Harriman interpretation of the Manila Communique, the sooner the Harriman interpretation is reaffirmed the better so that we can seek to find ways to (a) explain to Saigon and the TCCs our justification for this unilateral interpretation, (b) minimize the impact on the GVN, and (c) find a way to reassure the GVN that it is not a bugout formula and is one that they could in fact live with if

--- it were clearly related to a package settlement, or if

--- it were not implemented until the GVN situation on the ground was considerably improved.

g

ROBERT N. GINSBURGH

~~SECRET/NODIS/HARVAN/DOUBLE PLUS~~